

FACE-TO-FACE CONTACTS WITH CHILDREN AND FAMILIES FOLLOWING THE INITIATION OF ONGOING SERVICES

Child safety is the paramount concern guiding the requirements for a CPS Ongoing Services worker's face-to-face contact with children, their parents or legal guardians, and/or other family members in a parenting role. Regular and consistent face-to-face contact between agencies and families is necessary to build a working partnership and develop strong relationships between all parties while providing an opportunity to assess and manage present and impending danger threats to child safety.

Applicability

This standard applies to cases where there has been a decision made to provide ongoing child protective services.

The initiation of ongoing child protective services begins when a supervisor has approved the decisions described in the CPS Investigation Standards and the decision is made to open the case for ongoing services. Until the case is assigned to the Ongoing Services worker, the requirements of this policy apply to the Initial Assessment worker responsible for the case.

Purpose

The purpose of face-to-face contact is to manage child safety, establish, develop, and maintain helping relationships with children and families, and evaluate case progress. The agency must continuously assess the following:

- whether those in a parenting role have the capacity to provide a safe home for their children,
- whether safety threats and the risk of maltreatment have been reduced,
- whether family members understand the need/purpose for CPS involvement,
- whether selected services and providers meet the family's needs,
- whether plans should be revised (e.g. safety, case, family interaction),
- whether reunification or another permanency option is appropriate, and
- whether the case can be closed for ongoing child protective services.

Initial face-to-face contact

The Ongoing Services worker must have face-to-face contact with the child(ren) and individuals in a parenting role (excluding out-of-home care providers) within seven (7) working days from the initiation of ongoing services unless a safety plan requires more immediate contact.

The initial contacts with the family introduce the Ongoing Services worker (for agencies that transfer the case at this point), the changing role of the agency, and the family assessment and case planning process that is to follow. Whenever possible, the first face-

to-face contact with the family should occur in their home and include the entire family. In families where domestic violence has been identified or is suspected, the agency should assess whether or not scheduling family meetings will jeopardize the safety of a family member or any other participant including agency staff.

Face-to-Face Contact During Family Assessment and Ongoing Services Provision

1. The agency must assure that child(ren) and individuals in a parenting role (excluding out-of-home care providers) have monthly face-to-face contact with an individual (Ongoing Services worker, contract agency or Tribal social worker) unless the safety plan requires more frequent contact.
2. In cases where someone other than the Ongoing Services worker is providing face-to-face contact, that individual must have information from the safety plan, family assessment, and case plan and must have a thorough understanding of their role with the family.
3. The Ongoing Services worker is responsible for managing the safety, case, and permanency plans. In cases where someone other than the Ongoing Services worker is providing face-to-face contact, the individual must provide monthly communication to the Ongoing Services worker regarding child safety, and progress on the case plan. The agency must be notified immediately in situations where threats to child safety have been identified.
4. If the child resides in a placement more than 60 miles from their residence, face-to-face contact can be quarterly if the placement facility or another agency or contract worker (e.g., licensing worker, residential staff, treatment foster care worker, etc.) is maintaining at least monthly face-to-face contact with the child.
5. If joint (courtesy) supervision is requested, the Ongoing Services worker must maintain monthly contact with the child until joint (courtesy) supervision is established. Once joint (courtesy) supervision has been established, all requirements of this policy apply to both agencies. The agencies involved must determine the specifics of who will provide what services and how communication between agencies will occur.

The Family Engagement and Assessment Process

The family engagement and assessment process builds on information from the initial assessment/investigation. At this point in the case process, agency staff focus on developing a more thorough understanding of safety threats and risk issues within the family system. If a child is in out-of-home care, the family engagement and assessment process should enhance the family's understanding of the impact of placement on the child and the need for timely permanence.

Fundamental to the family engagement and assessment process is establishing a relationship with the family and developing a more thorough understanding of family dynamics that led to CPS intervention. Accomplishing this necessitates a high level of contact by the Ongoing Services worker to develop plans that address the threats to child safety and risk of maltreatment in the family. This initial level of involvement by the Ongoing Services worker should then be focused and may be more intensive than the service provision which is to follow.

Ongoing Services Provision

During ongoing services provision, the frequency of face-to-face contact is based on the needs of the family as identified in the safety or case plan. At this point in the case process, face-to-face contact is important as a means to continuously assess safety and achieve permanency for children. To achieve this, it may be necessary to occasionally conduct unannounced or unscheduled face-to-face contact or, when appropriate, visits with the child should be alternated between the placement location and another community setting (e.g. daycare, school, counseling appointment). In these instances, the face-to-face contact should occur in a manner that is consistent with the purpose of the home visit and is respectful of the child and the parents or caregivers involved in the contact.

Planning for Case Closure

Prior to case closure, the Ongoing Services worker must have face-to-face contact with family members to:

- discuss their progress in keeping their children safe and reducing the risk of subsequent maltreatment,
- assist the family in developing a plan to meet family needs after agency involvement ends,
- refer the family to community services, if necessary, and
- explicitly state the date that ongoing child protective services will end.

Documentation Requirements

1. The Ongoing Services worker must document both completed and attempted face-to-face contacts with children and families in the family's case record. The worker must include:
 - the date, type, and duration of contact,
 - who was involved,
 - where the contact occurred,
 - the purpose of the contact, and
 - a summary of the meeting.

2. If the Ongoing Services worker is unable to meet requirements of this policy due to client unavailability or lack of cooperation, the circumstances must be documented in the family's case record.
3. Any exceptions to the requirements of this policy must be approved by a supervisor and documented in the family's case record.